**Common Core State Standards – Grade Span Description**

**SOURCE:** [**http://commoncore.org/free/index.php/grades/grade\_span\_k-5/**](http://commoncore.org/free/index.php/grades/grade_span_k-5/)

**Grades K-5**

When children enter elementary school, they are full of curiosity about the world around them. They want to know how things work, where things come from, what various words mean, and why people and animals in stories act the way they do. As they begin to recognize words and listen to stories with others at school, their curiosity builds, as does their knowledge.

Some children entering Kindergarten have begun to learn to read; others have not. The early elementary years are the prime time for children to make strides in reading, no matter what their level upon entering school. If they learn to sound out words accurately in the first few years of school, while building vocabulary, knowledge, and understanding, then reading in itself should not pose a problem for them later; but, if they enter third or fourth grade without knowing how to read confidently, it will be difficult for them to handle the schoolwork. They may need intensive remedial help with basic skills while other students are studying literature and other subjects. For this reason, it is essential that they learn to read confidently and fluently early. Therefore the K–1 maps (and eventually more) include a pacing guide of milestone instructional goals.  This guide was written by Louisa Moats, a reading expert who was on the team that wrote the CCSS reading standards. Louisa has paced the reading foundation standards logically across the unit maps. Concepts of print, phonological awareness, and text-reading fluency are all addressed in a developmental progression that interacts with and influences each other.

**In the initial years of elementary school,** children also discover new worlds of literature. Immersed in stories, sounds, and letters, they make connections between what they hear and what they read. Starting in Kindergarten, children listen to a wide variety of excellent literary and nonfiction texts: stories, poems, songs, fables, myths, legends, biographies, and books on historical and scientific subjects. They hear literature read aloud to them daily, and they act out select stories. Through the diverse use of texts, topics are introduced and reintroduced in greater depth deliberately across the grades. The arts are integrated into the units; for example, students look at a collage by Henri Matisse in a unit on animals and listen to Sergei Prokofiev’s *Peter and the Wolf* in a unit on tales passed down from generation to generation. Certain units (such as “The Wild West” in Grade 2) are organized around geographical and historical topics, allowing students to compare descriptions of events and characters. In their dramatic readings, students build expressiveness while experimenting with different voices. Thus, they start to grasp the rhythms, forms, and themes of literary language and build knowledge and vocabulary throughout the content areas. Every day, they are immersed in sounds, stories, and ideas, and the teacher leads them in lively discussions and activities.

**By the end of second grade,** students should be able to read simple storybooks fluently and to write in print. In addition, they have learned to use graphic organizers to plan their writing. In third grade they read chapter books and write reports, letters, stories, poems, and descriptions. Throughout the early grades, they learn basic grammatical and literary terms and start to understand word structure. As the act of reading becomes second nature, students can focus on the content of what they read. By reading a wide variety of genres centered on important historic and scientific themes, students build content knowledge and begin to comprehend at greater levels of depth and in a wider range of topics.

**When students enter fourth grade,** they have a background in mythology, poetry, fiction, folktales, and nonfiction texts on a variety of subjects. They may be interested in specific topics that have come up in their classes or that they have pursued on their own. They may have taken an interest in a particular subject or begun to study a musical instrument, dance, or art. All of this will fuel their reading and writing.

**Students in fourth and fifth grades** delve into literature and nonfiction: They continue to read and discuss a wide variety of literature, nonfiction, fables, and mythology, as well as essays and speeches, and to make connections with the arts—for instance, by examining art by Michelangelo and a photograph from the Civil Warc. They learn about play, invention, investigation, and exploration, among other topics related to the life of the mind. They begin to understand the way in which literature offers insight into culture and history—for instance, by comparing Native American narratives with those of European settlers. As they read poetry, students practice their expressive delivery and learn about poetic elements, such as rhyme scheme, meter, stanza, metaphors, and similes, and how these contribute to the beauty and meaning of the poems. They learn to spend time with works that they do not immediately understand, allowing time for their understanding to grow. Certain units (such as “Clues to a Culture” in Grade 5) are organized around historical topics, allowing students to compare descriptions of events and characters. By the end of fifth grade, students are able to tackle serious topics such as life’s challenges and obstacles; civil and cultural strife; intellectual courage; and coming of age.  They also recognize literature’s sounds, word play, nonsense, invention, beauty, mystery, and sheer fun. Through the diverse use of texts, topics are introduced and reintroduced in greater depth deliberately across the grades.

Students in grades four and five learn to collaborate with peers while writing reflective essays, reports, journals, stories, and responses to literature and arts. They also learn to create multimedia presentations. They build on their grammatical knowledge and demonstrate command of grammar and usage. Word study is an essential part of the units: Students learn multiple meanings of words, continuing their study of morphology and beginning to study etymology, thus gaining insight into the relationship between English and other languages, ancient and modern. In their essays, they are able to articulate a central idea and illustrate it with examples; to discuss themes in the works they have read; and to respond both formally and informally to literature. Class discussions allow students to explore questions and ideas together; oral presentations allow them to draw on multiple resources, refine their speaking skills, and learn from each other.